

# WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



FEB. 18, 2010 Vol. 52 No. 6 50¢

## Feb. 13 international teach-in to demand: FREE MUMIA

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

In light of the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that opened the door for reinstatement of the death penalty for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, activists from the Philadelphia region, across the U.S. and around the globe will take part in an important teach-in in Philadelphia on Feb. 13, to take up the next stage in the struggle to free Mumia.

The event, from noon to 5 p.m. at the Abiding Truth Ministries Church in west Philadelphia, will provide updates on the latest legal developments, including the Jan. 19 U.S. Supreme Court decision that sends Abu-Jamal's case back to the Third Circuit Court to reconsider a ruling made by Judge William Yohn that overturned the death sentence in 2001. The Supreme Court's decision also went against a 2008 Third Circuit Court ruling which granted a new sentencing phase jury trial if the death penalty was to be reinstated for Abu-Jamal.

Both decisions are very dangerous, particularly in light of the recent election of Philadelphia's first African-American district attorney, Seth Williams, who campaigned on the promise to execute Abu-Jamal should the death sentence be reinstated.

The Feb. 13 program will connect local, national and even international activists involved in the 28-year-long fight to free Abu-Jamal through a network of video conferencing and video streaming. While most participants will gather for the teach-in in Philadelphia, those from other U.S. cities as well as Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean will be able to share in presentations and discussion on upcoming action proposals via the Internet.

Information will also be provided for those unfamiliar with this important case of the U.S.'s most prominent death row inmate, whose legal case dates back to Dec. 9, 1981, when Abu-Jamal was framed up for the murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Throughout the long series of legal proceedings since then, which have often in-



volved gross violations of his civil and legal rights, Abu-Jamal has maintained his innocence. The Feb. 13 meeting will address the state's efforts to silence Abu-Jamal — referred to by many as “the voice of the voiceless” — a campaign dating back to the 1970s Cointelpro campaign, when he was a young leader in the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party.

### Students and Young People for Mumia

Recognizing that it will take more than one campaign or one rally to win this important struggle, the meeting will provide updates on ongoing campaigns as well as the opportunity for new proposals to be raised, including expanding outreach to and education of students and youth, many of whom were not yet born when Abu-Jamal was first incarcerated or were young children during the massive rallies on his behalf in the late 1990s.

The necessity to reach young people was addressed by Larry Hales, speaking on behalf of the national youth organization FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together). Hales noted, “If it were not for a vigilant international campaign, Mumia would not be alive today. But much more vociferous action is required now, during this period of extreme economic downturn when millions have been laid off, are suffering, and

more and more people are being fed into the prison industrial complex.

“Students and young people are needed at the forefront of such a movement. Mumia, who first became politically active at the age of 15 and was a former member of the Black Panther Party, is a hero for young people.

“He has continued to be a member of the community of oppressed people fighting for a better world free from oppression, repression and exploitation,” said Hales. “He has continued to speak for the voiceless, the hundreds of thousands who are locked in cages, removed from society, and the many more who are caught up in the so-called criminal justice system.”

FIST is calling on students and youth to join in a new formation, Students and Young People for Mumia. Hales, who had a face-to-face meeting with Abu-Jamal this past September, told Workers World, “Mumia Abu-Jamal faces perhaps the most crucial period since 1999, when then governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge, signed the last of the two death warrants for Mumia, the first being in 1995.

“Life in prison is no option over the death penalty, but the struggle to free Mumia has always been a struggle that has had to fight to keep him alive while at

*Continued on page 3*

## YOUTH & STUDENTS



Student civil rights activists in Nashville, Tenn., 1960s

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

►► All out for March 4! 6-7



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# Homeless shelter threatened with foreclosure

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta

Located on Atlanta’s prestigious Peachtree Street, which is home to many upscale condos and towering office buildings, the Task Force for the Homeless has operated an emergency shelter with beds for 700 men; a daytime facility providing space for hundreds seeking relief from rain, cold and heat; a 24-hour hotline that offers multiple services to men, women and children; as well as a resident program for some two dozen employed men, who receive counseling help.

When the Task Force first opened the shelter in November 1997, this stretch of Peachtree, just north of the downtown area, was somewhat rundown. In the last decade, developers have bought up old buildings and constructed fancy apartments and condos, while Emory University expanded its hospital just up the block from the shelter.

The city administration under Mayor Shirley Franklin, in tandem with this gentrification, openly declared its bias against poor people by enacting city ordinances that encouraged racial profiling and criminalized anyone appearing homeless.

Since its inception in 1981, the Task Force has exposed the root causes of poverty and demanded justice, not charity, for people who have lost their homes, jobs, health and families under the profit-driven system of capitalism. So fiercely has the Task Force defended the right of all people to access the city’s public spaces that it has been targeted by the business elite and its political mouthpieces for destruction. The Task Force has not backed down in its assertion that racism and class privilege underlie all the rhetoric about downtown “improvement.”

Public funding to the organization has been cut through the deliberate intervention of the city government; private donors have been pressured to end their support; and last week, the group’s mortgage on its building was abruptly sold to a mysterious company, which immediately foreclosed on them. They have until March 3 to repay \$500,000, or the huge art deco building on the corner of Peachtree and Pine will be sold at auction.

Paradoxically, even as city leaders denigrate the work of the Task Force, homeless people are regularly brought to Peachtree-Pine from the multimillion dollar, taxpayer funded Gateway Center — the centerpiece of Mayor

Franklin’s plan to “end homelessness” in 10 years. Likewise, private shelters and agencies depend on the services provided by the Task Force.

While the seriousness of this series of attacks should not be underestimated, the Task Force has been launching its own counteroffensive, filing a lawsuit that will be heard in federal court this spring. Through discovery, the group’s lawyers have uncovered evidence of a multilayered conspiracy, extending from business leaders to elected government officials and nonprofit agencies, to deprive the Task Force of funding until they are forced under.

These are some of the same forces that have brought about the destruction of Atlanta’s public housing, forcing thousands of people into the hands of for-profit, slum landlords in neighborhoods wracked by foreclosures. Many others have moved out of the city altogether and an unknown number are now living in their cars, under bridges and in abandoned buildings.

The privatization of Grady Hospital — a safety net for the poor since its founding more than 100 years ago — was orchestrated by many of these same business leaders. Their decision to cut outpatient dialysis care for uninsured patients has brought national attention to this very image-conscious city. This media scrutiny, in addition to the battle waged by health care advocates and the patients themselves, has at least temporarily forced an extension of funding for private dialysis.

While every poverty index is sharply up in Atlanta — from the unemployment rate and the number of bankruptcies and foreclosures, to the increased demand for food from pantries — the city government so poorly managed a \$12.3 million federal program to rehabilitate foreclosed properties that it was denied a second program of more than \$57 million. Housing advocates and neighborhood associations are outraged by this incompetence or indifference to the crisis facing poor and working families. This failure to use federal funds for affordable, low-cost housing is considered by many to be the result of a conscious policy to change the demographics of Atlanta, the famed city “too busy to hate.”

The Task Force lawsuit lays bare the blatant effort by business forces to contravene the public interest and to direct elected officials to substitute their narrow financial interests over the greater good. The need for all forms of solidarity, whether monetary or political, is immediate. For information about how to stand with the Task Force for the Homeless, visit [www.homelesstaskforce.org](http://www.homelesstaskforce.org). □

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<b>Boston</b> 284 Amory St. Boston, MA 02130 617-522-6626 Fax 617-983-3836 <a href="mailto:boston@workers.org">boston@workers.org</a>	<b>Denver</b> <a href="mailto:denver@workers.org">denver@workers.org</a>	<b>Milwaukee</b> <a href="mailto:milwaukee@workers.org">milwaukee@workers.org</a>	<b>San Francisco</b> 2940 16th St., #207 San Francisco CA 94103 415-738-4739 <a href="mailto:sf@workers.org">sf@workers.org</a>
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			<b>Washington, D.C.</b> P.O. Box 57300 Washington, DC 20037 <a href="mailto:dc@workers.org">dc@workers.org</a>

Workers World  
55 West 17 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10011  
Phone: (212) 627-2994  
E-mail: [ww@workers.org](mailto:ww@workers.org)  
Web: [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org)  
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# Political prisoner Leonard Peltier on 34 years

*The following statement was issued Feb. 6.*

## Greetings to everyone,

Thirty-four years. It doesn't even sound like a real number to me. Not when one really thinks about being in a jail cell for that long. All these years and I swear, I still think sometimes I'll wake up from this nightmare in my own bed, in my own home, with my family in the next room. I would never have imagined such a thing. Surely the only place people are unjustly imprisoned for 34 years is in faraway lands, books or fairy tales.

It's been that long since I woke up when I needed to, worked where I wanted to, loved who I was supposed to love, or did what I was compelled to do. It's been that long — long enough to see my children have grandchildren. Long enough to

have many of my friends and loved ones die in the course of a normal life while I was here, unable to know them in their final days.

So often in my daily life, the thought creeps in — "I don't deserve this." It lingers like acid in my mouth. But I have to push those types of thoughts away. I made a commitment long ago, many of us did. Some didn't live up to their commitments, and some of us didn't have a choice. Joe Stuntz didn't have a choice. Neither did Buddy Lamont [both were killed in battles with the FBI — WW]. I never thought my commitment would mean sacrificing like this, but I was willing to do so nonetheless. And really, if necessary, I'd do it all over again, because it was the right thing to do. We didn't go to ceremony and say, "I'll fight for the people as long as it doesn't cost too much." We prayed, and we gave.

Like I say, some of us didn't have a choice. Our only other option was to run away, and we couldn't even do that. Back then, we had nowhere left to run to.

I have cried so many tears over these three-plus decades. Like the many families directly affected by this whole series of events, my family's tears have not been in short supply. Our tears have joined all the tears from over 500 years of oppression. Together our tears come together and form a giant river of suffering and, I hope, cleansing. Injustice is never final, I keep telling myself. I pray this is true for all of us.

To those who know I am innocent, thank you for your faith. And I hope you continue



working for my release. That is, to work towards truth and justice. To those who think me guilty, I ask you to believe in and work for the rule of law. Even the law says I should be free by now, regardless of guilt. What has happened to me isn't justice, it isn't the law, it isn't fair, it isn't right. This has been a long battle in an even longer war. But we have to remain vigilant, as we have a righteous cause. After all this time, I can

only ask this: Don't give up. Not ever. Stay in this fight with me. Suffer with me. Grieve with me. Endure with me. Believe with me. Outlast with me. And one day, celebrate freedom with me. Hoka hey!

**In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, Leonard Peltier**

# Lucasville uprising prisoner takes stand against harassment

**By Sharon Danann  
Cleveland**

Derek Cannon went on a two-week hunger strike from Jan. 14 to Jan. 28 at Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP), a super-max prison, after getting no response to his factual challenge to a Rules Infraction Board ticket. Cannon, who was sentenced to life in prison after the 1993 Lucasville, Ohio, prison uprising, ended his hunger strike out of consideration for the concerns of his spouse, Kandy Cannon.

Allegedly he and another prisoner got into an argument where they "threw blows but didn't hit each other," an absurd charge but the only way the guards could explain the lack of injuries on either prisoner. In fact, the argument was a minor verbal dispute that both Cannon and the other prisoner agree was resolved.

The prisoners have asked to have the truth of the matter demonstrated by consulting the tape from the security cameras, only to be given various excuses ranging from, "There are problems with the tape," to "There may not be a tape for that area," and "We go by eyewitnesses, we don't go by camera."

The prisoners were not given the tickets on the night of the dispute, but rather the following day by the morning shift corrections officers, who are known to be racists. Immediately after the tickets were given out, the guards went to a separate pod and strip-searched another Lucasville uprising prisoner, Greg Curry.

More than 400 prisoners participated in the April 1993 Lucasville uprising. Unlike the Attica rebellion of 1971, a negotiated settlement was reached after 11 days.

However, the amnesty terms of the settlement were quickly violated and 56 prisoners received convictions, with five getting death sentences. (Staughton Lynd, "Lucasville: the Untold Story of a Prison Uprising," 2004)

Cannon and Curry were two of several prisoners who did not participate in the uprising, but were approached by prosecutors to lie on the stand to convict Keith LaMar (Bomani Shakur), who was sentenced to death. When they refused, the prosecutors concocted murder convictions with life sentences.

At the time of the uprising, Cannon was nine days from parole and had been transferred out of Lucasville in anticipation. He was not even there at the time they said he murdered someone. Cannon stated about this conviction, "I know that being poor, Black and already incarcerated played a major part against me." (www.ourfight-4justice.com) He has spent almost 17 more years in prison, most of it in solitary confinement, for refusing to commit perjury and frame his friend on bogus charges.

As a result of the recent ticket, Cannon was put in segregation in the area known as "the hole," losing privileges including phone calls with Kandy. The more serious issue is that his status was dropped from Level 4A to Level 4B. He will no longer be allowed to have contact visits with his wife and son. Visits were scheduled for Feb. 6 and Feb. 10.

It also means a longer time until freedom. Cannon needs to be at Level 3 to be paroled.

For the Lucasville uprising prisoners overall, a great deal of progress has been made in recent years in getting status lev-

els improved, recreation with other prisoners and contact visits with their loved ones. In addition, at least six have been transferred out of OSP to other prisons, which places them in general prison populations. Several have even been paroled.

But the Lucasville rebellion resulted in the death of one guard. There is an element among some of the correctional officers of "we will never forgive or forget" that expresses itself in incidents like the present one involving Cannon and Curry. Cannon and his supporters in the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network have decided that this cannot go unaddressed.

Individuals and organizations are asked to call or send letters to Warden David Bobby, Ohio State Penitentiary, 878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd., Youngstown, OH 44505, tel. 330-743-0700, fax 330-743-0841. Let him know that tickets should not be given out without a factual basis and that Derek Cannon's Level 4A status should be restored in time for him to have his contact visits with his family in February.



Derek Cannon and family.

Supporters of the Lucasville uprising prisoners from around the world will be informing Warden Bobby that the word will be gotten out to other people, organizations, the media and public officials. All will be told that the treatment of prisoners at OSP is so unjust that one of them engaged in a hunger strike as a measure of last resort. □

## PENNSYLVANIA

# SSI cuts target state's poor

**By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia**

Nearly 200 demonstrators, many in wheelchairs, gathered at the Broad Street Ministry on Feb. 3 to march to City Hall in protest of \$22 million in cuts to Supplemental Security Income. The cuts took effect in Pennsylvania on Feb. 1.

Many participants in this "funeral procession for justice" wore black or carried mock coffins and tombstone-shaped placards, underscoring the deadly aspect this devastating blow will have for 340,000 of the state's most vulnerable residents, 67,000 of whom are children.

The state has tried to downplay the monthly SSI decrease of \$5 for individuals and \$10 for families as insignificant. The official announcement about the cuts was not even made until two weeks before they were scheduled to take effect, even though the state's budget was approved in September.

For people with disabilities, seniors and children on SSI already struggling to survive on \$600 a month or less, these reductions could mean the inability to afford the co-payment on an important

medicine or to buy tokens to get to school. For people with incomes already just 77.7 percent of the federal poverty level, the loss of even \$5 can be devastating.

Many elderly and disabled in the state rely on paratransit services, which can cost \$20 for just one round trip. For families with children, \$10 less a month — the cost of a box of cereal and a gallon of milk — might mean skipping yet another meal.

Nearly one-third of the state's SSI recipients live in Philadelphia, where very few supermarkets are easily accessible without a car. For the 30,000 others living in the surrounding suburbs, grocery options are often limited to higher-priced stores like Whole Foods.

Speakers at the rally noted that as Pennsylvania state legislators and Gov. Ed Rendell are taking money from the poorest in the state, plans were dropped to tax corporations that are rapidly expanding drilling for natural gas. These companies are using the environmentally hazardous process of hydraulic fracturing.

Rally organizers handed out hundreds of fliers to people along the march route urging them to call Gov. Rendell and area state legislators to reverse the cuts. □

# FREE MUMIA

*Continued from page 1*

the same time demanding his freedom. At all costs it is important to stop the plans of the state of Pennsylvania to kill Mumia."

The Feb. 13 teach-in will provide updates on two important international petition campaigns on Abu-Jamal's behalf. The petitions are addressed to both President Obama and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and call for an investigation into civil rights violations in this case as well as an examination into the role played by the treacherous Cointelpro campaign against Abu-Jamal.

The teach-in will also take up a series of meetings and demonstrations being

proposed from March through July 2010 to broaden awareness of the case and garner more support for Abu-Jamal. "Time is running out," stressed Pam Africa, chairperson of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is a key sponsor of the Feb. 13 event. "The time for organizing is now, organizing with all the strength that you have. Tell the people they must get into the streets in order to save this brother who has been on the front lines, from death row, on every issue of social justice that there is."

For more information on the Feb. 13 event, call 215-476-8812, 212-330-8029, or 212-633-6646, or visit [www.freemumia.com](http://www.freemumia.com) or [www.millions4mumia.org](http://www.millions4mumia.org). □



# President Obama — one year later

By Larry Holmes

*The following excerpts are from a talk providing a Marxist analysis on President Barack Obama's first year in office by Larry Holmes, a Secretariat member of Workers World Party, at a Black History Month forum in New York City on Feb. 6. Other speakers included Dolores Cox, an International Action Center volunteer, on the struggle to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal; and LeiLani Dowell, a Fight Imperialism, Stand Together organizer, on the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education. Go to [workers.tv](http://workers.tv) to hear these talks in their entirety.*

It is kind of a bitter Black History Month 2010. Maybe some people are still celebrating the first year of the first African-American president. A lot of people are thinking about the suffering of the Haitian people. This is not just a contemporary feeling. The Haitian people play a role in the history of Africa. They are the symbol, the beacon, of the African peoples' struggle against slavery.

Of course, last November when Obama was inaugurated it felt like an earthquake. Because for some of us, we thought it would take some kind of earthquake for this country to elect an African-American president.

It was kind of an earthquake that paved the way for Obama's election — it was about six weeks before the election and was located on Wall Street and the capitals of other capitalist countries. That was the near collapse of the worldwide capitalist financial system.

A year ago when we were watching him being inaugurated, the crisis might have been obscured by the shock and elation over the inauguration of the first African-American president. Well, the shock and awe are gone and now people are focused on the crisis.

That crisis can be briefly defined in a couple of processes. One of those processes is the decline of U.S. imperialist domination worldwide. This is the reason why Obama campaigned on talking to enemies. It wasn't enlightenment. It is this domination — U.S. imperialist domination of the world for 70 or 80 years that



Larry Holmes, LeiLani Dowell and Dolores Cox

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

has allowed it to afford a certain higher standard of living for enough of a section of the working class who up until recently considered themselves middle class.

But that is not the only process. It is the deepening of imperialist globalization, which only speeds up the inherent crisis of capitalist overproduction. That intensifies the war on the working class. This is the political crisis that Obama has been asked to sit on, and to do something about. The attacks are such and what is coming is such that many people consider it a tipping point in the world capitalist crisis. And what do we mean by that? Because of these changes, U.S. imperialism is beginning to lose that which is most valuable and important to them. What is it? Political stability.

## Filling the vacuum

Political stability is defined as doing what is necessary to keep a certain section of the working class — enough of the working class — in a state where they do not rise up, where their leaders are loyal to the system, where there is no opposition. That game is coming to an end. That political stability is beginning to show signs of cracking up and they are worried about what the future may bring: class struggle, class struggle.

Obama has been given the thankless

job — and some people consider it a setup — of presiding over this political period, this instability, this crisis, this new situation where you have permanent high unemployment and underemployment.

We don't even want to get into the unemployment rate for Black and Latino/a workers, especially for youth, because it is five and 10 times the official unemployment rate. This is what Obama is supposed to keep the lid on.

This is one of the reasons he opened up his administration with so-called health care reform. We are all for the uninsured getting health insurance and people not being disqualified because of pre-existing conditions, but that got lost in the concessions being given to the big insurance companies. So it began to get weaker and weaker and people got less and less excited about it and it was easier and easier for the insurance companies to fund a big right-wing insurrection.

The so-called health care reform legislation in reality was a surrogate for not talking about jobs, which is the real crisis. Not that health care isn't important, but underneath everything the big platform is jobs. Because he didn't have a program for jobs, he gave it over to the right. Not that they have a jobs program either.

There is a big vacuum where there should be angry, mass mobilized, class

struggle. In the absence there is a lot of noxious poisonous trash that is filling that vacuum.

Never in our lifetime, certainly not in mine, have people been angrier at Wall Street, angrier at the banks. The banks are the symbol of capitalism. Everybody hates the banks. They want to go and attack the banks. It opens up an opportunity for a huge movement that is so anti-capitalist. But instead, what do we get? The Tea Party Movement, paid for by the insurance companies and a couple of other millionaires and billionaires. They are the ones charging into town hall meetings and bullying people. This is not a populist movement. It's dirty, racist, reactionary, pro-war, anti-immigrant, anti-woman, anti-LGBT, everything anti-socialist.

The labor leadership has been let off the hook too long. Pressure has got to be put on them. They need to be dragged out of politicians' offices where they spend too much time and too much money. They need to pay attention, not only to their members but also to all workers, whether they are undocumented, unemployed or underemployed — whether they have nothing to do with the industry their union is organizing.

Our view of unions is that they are organizing centers for the entire working class and the oppressed. They welcome the unemployed and Black and Latino/a youth. They welcome the poorest even if they don't have any dues. They mobilize them and champion all political and social issues. At this stage of imperialist globalization and the crisis that we are facing, unions better become more and more like the revolutionary view that Marx and other revolutionaries had of unions, or they will not survive.

We are going to Washington on the 75th Anniversary of the WPA. That is the Works Progress Administration. We are going to bring the unemployed and our union allies, our community allies and whoever else we can get to go with us. We want a real public works program that employs millions and millions of people — not strikebreaking scab jobs to bust unions, not workfare, but real jobs that pay a living wage. That is what Martin Luther King said — a job or a living income. □

# Wayne County workers protest forced furloughs

By Cheryl LaBash  
Detroit

On Feb. 4, hundreds of Wayne County workers protested forced weekly unpaid furlough days that were to begin the next day. This 20-percent pay cut will affect 700 selected workers, many making less than \$30,000 per year, in a move designed to force workers and their union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, to accept an across-the-board 10-percent pay cut. Detroit city and school workers, who are fighting cuts in hours and benefits, joined the after-work picket.

All levels of government point to reduced tax bases and revenue sharing from the federal government to justify imposing pay cuts, forced days off without pay, benefit cuts and drastically reduced pay and benefits for new hires. But shifting the crisis onto workers accelerates a downward spiral of reduced tax income, further constricting budgets.

Both Wayne County and Detroit have borrowed, using short-term budget stabilization bonds to cover budget shortfalls. Who did they borrow from? The very same banks and financial institutions that got bailed out by the federal government and that continue to profit from mortgage foreclosures and the cruel uprooting of millions of families. Workers are cut to pay the interest on these loans.

By expanding the public work force — not contracting it — the devastation of communities across the country can be stopped. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration began a real, public jobs pro-

gram that put more than 8 million people to work. In Detroit, Western High School was constructed, miles of streets paved and sidewalks constructed, sewer and water mains built.



City and county workers protest furloughs and budget cuts.

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

With unemployment nearly 50 percent in Detroit, the largest city in Wayne County, the emergency nature of this crisis is clearest and hits African-American and Latino/a youth even harder. The Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act, a law that says the government must provide jobs when private employers will not do so, is still on the books.

The money is there to do it. Cut the military budget that kills people in other lands while pumping profits into the military-industrial complex; cancel or suspend interest payments owed to the banks; or tax financial transactions. These measures could easily fund full employment and they need only an executive emergency order to implement. Who will fight for it? □



# Bosses’ doubletalk can’t hide the crisis

# Mobilize to demand government give jobs

By Fred Goldstein

The big business media and the Obama administration trumpeted the message of hope and recovery last week when the government announced a drop in the official unemployment rate.

The Bail Out the People Movement, however, is not waiting around for a job recovery. Instead it is building a broad-based coalition to go to Washington on April 10, the 75th anniversary of the Works Progress Administration. It will demand a massive government jobs program to give every worker a job at a living wage or a guaranteed income. Eight million workers got jobs under the Roosevelt administration’s WPA during the Depression of the 1930s.

This mobilization will be an answer to the smoke and mirrors coming from the government about the job situation and job creation.

Official government reports declared that the unemployment rate dropped from 10 percent to 9.7 percent in January. In the same government report, however, came the baffling announcement of a net loss of 20,000 jobs in the same month. This number is inexplicable. Various attempts to fathom this contradiction have been made by citing “seasonal” adjustments, recalculations of the workforce, etc.

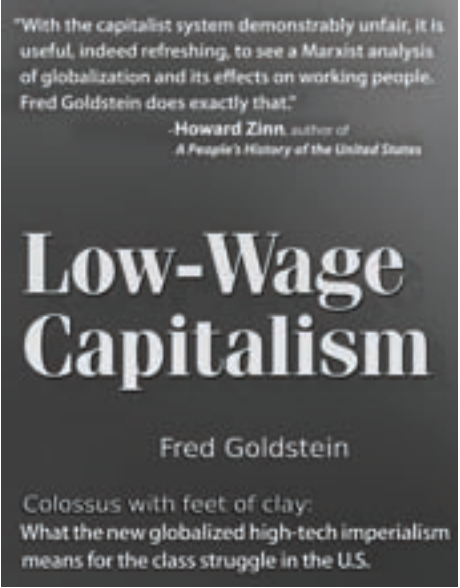
But it all adds up to government statisticians manipulating numbers in order to give the working class false hope for a meaningful economic recovery. The aim is to keep the workers and the communities quiet so they will leave everything to the government, the bosses, the bankers, and the capitalist parties and politicians instead of mobilizing to fight back.

**‘Productivity’ and overproduction**

What the workers are facing now is a massive, historic crisis of capitalist overproduction. The capitalists are always claiming that what is needed in the economy is more “productivity.” Productivity means getting more production out of workers in less time. The capitalists all aim to produce more and capture a larger share of the market in order to make more profits.

In their competition for markets and profits, the capitalists produce way beyond what the workers can afford to buy with their wages. Then there is a crisis of overproduction. Factories and stores shut down. Workers are laid off. But then they have even less money with which to buy.

The crisis of overproduction gets worse over time as the bosses create new machinery and more and more ways to speed up workers. This time it has reached a new level. Now the bosses are trying to restore their profits and operations by laying off more workers.



Most big companies, like Ford, General Motors, Microsoft, Wal-Mart, Oracle, IBM and on down the line, have laid off workers permanently. This is the way they fight their profit/market crisis — by creating a crisis of unemployment for the working class. The contradictions that fly in the face of official optimism demand a broad response.

The Labor Department has now revised previous data and admitted that things are much worse than Washington has been saying all along. The economy contained 1.36 million fewer jobs in December than originally thought, a downward adjustment of roughly 1 percent. Using this reduced number forced an overall annual adjustment, which showed that 8.4 million workers have lost jobs since the downturn began in 2007 — more than a million above the previous estimate. The revisions showed the economy lost 150,000 jobs in December, far more than the 85,000 initially reported. (New York Times, Feb. 6)

Those out of work for six months or longer swelled to 6.3 million in January, from 6.1 million in December — the highest level since the government began tracking such data in 1948. While the number of workers forced to work part time was reduced, there were still three-quarters of a million who dropped out of the workforce because they gave up looking for jobs.

The unemployment rate reached 16.5 percent among African Americans, 12.6 percent among Latinos/as, and 26.4 percent among teenagers. Some 11.8 percent of immigrant workers were unemployed in January, compared to 10.3 percent of U.S.-born workers, the Labor Department said on Feb 5. (Wall Street Journal, Feb. 6) The decline in construction has devastated the immigrant community, especially the undocumented.

Juan Ralda, 23 years old, told the Journal that he is an expert in masonry who worked for a contractor in Santa Monica, Calif., until bank financing dried up residential projects.

“I haven’t had steady work for a year,” said Ralda, a Guatemalan immigrant. He used to send home \$300 a month to help support his mother and three younger siblings.

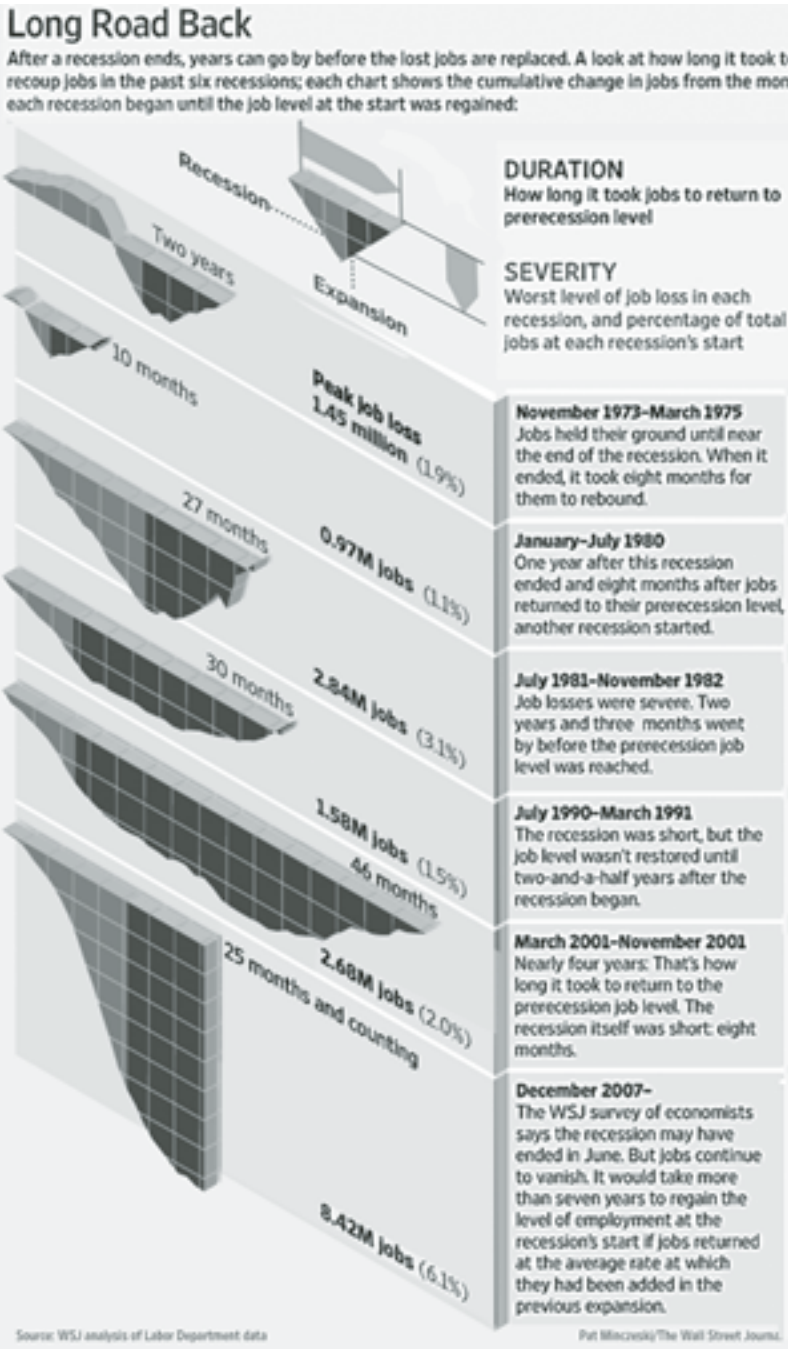
## LOW-WAGE CAPITALISM

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**APRIL 10: Give workers jobs!**

The message that the Bail Out the People Movement will take to Washington on the April 10 march is that all that money should be used to give workers jobs. The government should take the trillions of dollars that were given to the banks, to insurance companies like AIG, to corporations like GM and Chrysler, and as subsidies to agribusiness — and all the other government handouts that go in one way or another to the capitalist class — and create a fund to give workers jobs or income.

The money should be used for many other things, too — for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, especially for the unemployed; for an end to budget cuts; to guarantee education and food security, to name just a few.

But the basic demand for a massive government jobs program on the scale of the WPA must be the starting point for dealing with the crisis of the working class and the massive unemployment brought about by the capitalist profit system.

President Franklin Roosevelt first inaugurated the Civilian Conservation Corps. in 1933 and the WPA in 1935 under the pressure of a mass movement of the unemployed. The masses demonstrated, fought the police, defied sheriffs and marshals, and put evicted families back into their homes by the hundreds of thousands. This movement was threatening the very social foundation of U.S. capitalism.

The WPA at that time was a concession, meant to head off a wider social rebellion and possibly a revolution. The legislation creating the WPA came at the initiative of Washington as a matter of protecting capitalism.

In today’s circumstances, in the absence of a mass movement, Washington and the ruling class are going in the opposite direction from that of the Roosevelt administration — they are funneling tax cuts to businesses. Some \$100 billion to \$150 billion in so-called stimulus money will go to the bosses in the hope that they will create jobs.

But with at least 15 million officially unemployed, millions more who have dropped out and are not counted, and millions working part time who cannot live on their wages, the government plan is a drop in the bucket that mainly benefits the bosses.

The demand for a WPA-style program, where the government is obliged to directly give a job or an income to everyone who needs it, is not meant to save capitalism but to start an urgently needed struggle against the capitalist class. The aim is to relieve the crisis of the working class, organized and unorganized, employed and unemployed, documented and undocumented, the communities, the students and youth, women and men of all races and nationalities. In a word, it is to open up a struggle against the capitalist crisis and ultimately against the capitalist profit system itself. □

lings. “Now, I barely earn enough money to eat and pay the rent.”

**Budget cuts on top of layoffs**

Making the need for a mobilization of the unions, the unemployed, the communities and the working class in general more pressing, states like California, Michigan, New York, Florida, Nevada and many others are cutting their budgets while funneling billions of dollars in interest to the banks. They are making the workers and communities suffer the crisis while the likes of Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, Citibank and Bank of America rake in record profits and bonuses.

Food pantries are running out of food because of the rise in the number of hungry people. The homeless population is growing under the impact of foreclosures and evictions. Hospitals are closing; public schools are starved for funds; college students are forced to drop out of school because of tuition increases. Yet the vaults of the banks are filled with untold sums of money given them by the government in the form of interest payments and just plain handouts.

Those interest payments coming from the government treasuries are taken from workers’ wages, in the form of either payroll taxes or sales taxes. Wages that workers sweated for are being taken from social services and redirected into the treasuries of the rich.

The same is true of the Pentagon, which got \$700 billion this year alone — taken from the working class and the middle class. The military uses that money to kill and destroy — to make the world safe for the giant corporations that want to control the oil in the Persian Gulf and the region around Afghanistan and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the working class at home goes without jobs.



# AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

# Youth played pivotal role in civil rights, Black Powe

**By Abayomi Azikiwe**  
**Editor, Pan-African News Wire**

It was on Feb. 1, 1960, some five decades ago, that the student movement was initiated when four youths were arrested for demanding service at a segregated whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C.

When the Southwide Student Leadership Conference on Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation was held in April of that same year, at least 56 colleges in the region had participants linked to the so-called “sit-in movement.” These activists were spread out over 12 states and had links with students from 19 northern colleges and universities.

The gathering was sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and executive director Ella Baker. The over 300 students who were delegates and observers to the conference witnessed the formation of a continuing Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which would constitute itself later as a more structured organization with a headquarters as well as field workers.

With the intensification of the campaigns to abolish legalized segregation and to win universal suffrage for African Americans in many areas of the southern United States, SNCC began to play a critical role in the civil rights movement. In 1961, the “Freedom Rides” were launched by the Congress on Racial Equality, resulting in the bombing of an integrated busload of freedom riders in Anniston, Ala., and severe beatings by white racists in a Greyhound bus depot in Birmingham.

As a result of these actions carried out against the freedom riders, CORE called off the campaign aimed at outlawing segregated interstate transportation facilities in the South. However, it was the student activists from SNCC based in the Nashville area who pledged to continue the freedom rides until the segregation laws governing interstate transportation in the South were overturned.

The SNCC activists in the area worked with the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference under the influence of Rev. James Lawson, who taught seminars on



March on Washington, 1963.

www.blackpast.org

nonviolent protest methods.

Student activist Lucretia Collins summed up the sentiments within SNCC when she stated: “In Nashville, we had been informed that CORE was going to have Freedom Rides that could carry people all over the South and their purpose was to test the facilities at the bus stations in the major cities.

“Later we heard that the bus of the Freedom Riders had been burned on Mother’s Day in Anniston, Alabama, and that another bus had been attacked by people in Birmingham.

“CORE was discontinuing the Freedom Rides, people said. We felt that it had to continue even if we had to do it ourselves. We knew we were subject to being killed. This did not matter to us.

“There was so much at stake, we could not allow segregationists to stop us. We had to continue that Freedom Ride even if we were killed in the process.” (“The Making of Black Revolutionaries,” by James Foreman, 1972)

After the continuation of the Freedom

Rides by SNCC, the government was forced to intervene and repeal the segregation laws that regulated interstate public transportation. This was only done after numerous activists were beaten, tortured and imprisoned on false charges in Parchman Correctional Facility in Mississippi.

### Fighting for political power

SNCC, however, was not content to merely abolish the segregation laws. It recognized that political power being denied to African Americans in the South would continue to perpetuate the system of oppression and inequality. Consequently, the organization took a great interest in developments in Fayette County, Tenn., where the African-American community had suffered severe reprisals for their efforts aimed at voter registration.

By 1963, the slogan “one man, one vote” became the cornerstone of SNCC’s organizational program. This slogan, demanding the establishment of universal suffrage in the U.S., paralleled the efforts taking place within the anti-colonial struggle in Africa.

When Oginga Odinga, the Home Affairs minister of the newly independent government in Kenya, visited the U.S. in late 1963, Atlanta was the last stop on his itinerary. Several representatives of SNCC, which was headquartered in Atlanta, visited Odinga at his hotel, where they presented him with gifts and exchanged solidarity greetings.

After the meeting with Odinga, SNCC members held a sit-in at a segregated restaurant in the city, resulting in the arrests of 17 of their members. This event prompted other protest activities against segregation in the city, where several hundred people participated and were arrested.

James Forman, the executive secretary of SNCC, stated some years later: “All these activities, beginning with our visit to Oginga Odinga, must have made some people on a higher level squirm too. Here was a high-ranking foreign dignitary, on an official visit, commenting that the racial situation in the United States was ‘very pitiful’ and that the United States ‘practices segregation — which is what we are fighting in Africa.’

“The racist image of this country that SNCC’s work projected was in sharp conflict with the picture of democracy at work painted by the bureaucratic beavers in

Washington, D.C.” (Forman, “The Making of Black Revolutionaries”)

During 1964, SNCC embarked upon its most challenging effort with the Mississippi Summer Project, which was launched in coalition with other civil rights organizations operating in the state. Under the direction of this alliance, known as the Council of Federated Organizations, nearly 1,000 volunteers were mobilized from northern universities and communities to travel to Mississippi that summer to organize an independent Freedom Democratic Party and to register thousands of African Americans to vote.

The state’s racists responded with the murder of several civil rights workers and the jailing and beating of scores of others. By the conclusion of the summer, the MFDP activists had attempted to unseat the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party delegation to the national convention in Atlantic City.

Although the MFDP was never seated at the National Democratic Convention in 1964 and the federal legislation on universal suffrage would not be passed until after the Selma campaign of early 1965, the efforts of the MFDP and its SNCC supporters were successful in bringing broader segments of the community into the struggle for political empowerment and national recognition.

### SNCC & the global anti-colonial struggle

As a result of the pioneering work of SNCC, it was invited to send a delegation to tour several independent nations in Africa during the fall of 1964. The group spent two weeks in the Republic of Guinea at the special invitation of President Ahmed Sekou Toure. After this, John Lewis and Donald Harris continued the sojourn in Kenya and Zambia as well as other countries, while the other members of SNCC returned to the U.S.

Forman, who was a leading member of the SNCC delegation to Africa, said in 1972: “[T]he trip for me was a culmination of my life in several ways. Africa as a black continent, as our homeland, had always been on my mind.” The SNCC executive secretary went on to say, “I had also dreamed for years of helping to build an organization to achieve popular power in the United States and then to relate it with one or more African countries for common revolutionary purposes.”

After 1966, SNCC would create an International Affairs section under Forman’s direction. Forman represented the organization at an international conference on settler colonialism in southern Africa that was held in Zambia in 1967. He also spoke before the United Nations Fourth Committee on Decolonization later that same year.

The role of SNCC during this period illustrated the interconnectedness of the African-American struggle and developments on the continent of Africa. This intersection of the history of Africans in various parts of the world would continue throughout the remaining years of the 20th century.

### SNCC, urban rebellions & the workers’ movement

What distinguished SNCC from other civil rights organizations was its work within the cities, small towns and rural areas of the South where the development of local leadership was a key aspect of its political program. In 1965-66 in Lowndes County, Ala., SNCC’s work with farmers and youth led to the formation of the original Black Panther Party.

# Justice for police brutality survivor Jordan Miles

**By Sean Schafron**  
**Pittsburgh**

Amid mounting pressure from the community and activists, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl met the press on Feb. 1 and announced that three officers involved in the beating of Jordan Miles were now on paid administrative leave, as an investigation continued.

Ravenstahl stated: “I feel it is necessary to restore a sense of safety, trust and peace in our communities,” and added that the decision was “necessary for the safety of the officers involved.”

There was no concern for the safety of 18-year-old Miles on Jan. 12. Late that evening, the young Black honors student was walking to his grandmother’s home when three plainclothes police officers jumped out of a white car and viciously attacked him. The officers involved — Richard Ewing, David Sisak and Michael Saldutte — are now essentially on paid vacation.

Miles is due for a preliminary hearing on Feb. 18 on charges of aggravated assault and resisting arrest. Miles’ mother, Terez, is calling for all charges against her son to be dropped.

There is a pattern of police brutality against Black residents in Pittsburgh. On Oct. 12, 1995, Johnny Gammage, a 31-year-old Black man, was pulled over by police while driving a Jaguar through a mostly white Pittsburgh community. The vehicle had been loaned to him by his cousin, National Football League player Ray Seals. The unarmed Gammage died from asphyxiation due to pressure applied to his chest and neck by police officers John Vojtas, Michael Albert, Keith Henderson and Shawn Peterson. All charges against the officers involved in the Gammage killing were dropped.

The struggle against racist police brutality continues, as hopes remain for justice to be delivered to the police officers who beat Miles. □



## New York

## er movements

## Funding cut for summer youth jobs

Not only did the Black Panthers in Alabama push for the right to vote and the development of an organization that was independent of the racist-controlled state Democratic Party, it also advocated and practiced self-defense for activists and the community as a whole. These efforts spread throughout the country and created the conditions for the founding of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, Calif., in October 1966.

Between 1964 and 1968 hundreds of urban rebellions erupted throughout the U.S. Chapters of the Black Panther Party grew rapidly all over the country from 1967 to 1969. The FBI and local law-enforcement agencies responded to the upsurge in revolutionary activity by directly and indirectly killing Malcolm X in 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in 1969. Hundreds of members of SNCC and the Black Panther Party and other revolutionaries were harassed, imprisoned and driven into exile.

In 1968, African-American workers in Detroit began to engage in wildcat strikes demanding an end to racism and super-

*Continued on page 11*

**By Jaimeson Champion  
New York**

With snow on the city sidewalks the summer still seems a long way away, but for many New York City students the anxiety over where they will find summer employment this year is inescapable. New York Gov. David Paterson's recently proposed executive budget for fiscal year 2010-11 cuts all state funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program. The proposed \$35 million budget cut to a program that last summer provided more than 50,000 jobs in NYC alone will make the already dismal job market for youth even bleaker.

Hundreds of youth rallied outside the offices of lawmakers in the state capital in Albany on Feb. 1 in opposition to the proposed cuts to SYEP and other youth programs. (Associated Press, Feb. 1)

SYEP is administered in NYC by the Department of Youth and Community Development. Many SYEP jobs are in the public and nonprofit sector and at community-based programs such as summer camps and youth centers.

In recent years, applications for SYEP have increased dramatically as the recession

has deepened and jobs for youth have become increasingly scarce. Applications for the program in NYC nearly doubled from 71,670 in 2006 to 139,597 in 2009. (nyc.gov)

This increase has occurred despite the fact that SYEP jobs come with a host of bureaucratic stipulations and pay the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, which is far from a real "living wage." It is a reflection of the fact that many of the relatively better-paying jobs in the retail/service sector that have traditionally been staffed by younger workers have been eliminated during the recession. The remaining positions are increasingly being filled by older workers who have lost their better-paying jobs in other industries.

The proposed \$35 million budget cut to SYEP is the single largest cut to any human services program in the New York state budget. Other cuts to youth services in the proposed budget include an \$11.4 million cut in funding for afterschool programs and a \$5 million cut to Supportive Housing for Families and Young Adults. (New York Non Profit Press, Jan. 22)

These budget cuts are part of the massive upward transfer of wealth that is occurring in New York and across the

country during the current recession. The money is being taken from youth, students and workers and is being deposited directly into the coffers of the big banks and corporations and into the pockets of the big-business politicians.

The politicians are cutting millions of dollars from youth programs while the Metropolitan Transit Authority pushes to eliminate discount student Metro passes. The MTA funnels the fares it collects to the big banks in the form of debt service payments, while the politicians hand out billions more to the same banks in the form of bailout funds. The net result is increased wealth and opulence for the few, and increased hardship, suffering and misery for the many.

This transfer of wealth is becoming more and more apparent with every new budget cut and banker's bonus. What is needed is a growing movement united in efforts to reverse it.

Across the U.S., students, workers and their allies are mobilizing for the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education. Actions on March 4 will call for an end to school closings, budget cuts, tuition hikes and other attacks. For more information, visit [www.defendededucation.org](http://www.defendededucation.org). □

## ‘HONOR LEGACIES BY CONTINUING THEM’

## Students, youth pick up banner of struggle

**By LeiLani Dowell**

*Following are excerpts from a talk given Feb. 6 at a Workers World forum in New York City commemorating Black History Month.*

Feb. 1 marked the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the sit-ins at so-called "whites only" lunch counters in Greensboro, N.C., a struggle that effectively launched the student movement for African-American civil rights. On that day, four Black students sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter at 4:30 pm and ordered coffee. When they were refused, they remained in their seats until the counter closed at 5:30.

Five days later more than 500 students packed the Woolworth's, as well as Kress, stores. In just two months, the sit-in movement had spread to 54 cities in nine states.

These actions led to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and later, the Black Panther Party, with militant youth leaders like Fred Hampton, who was assassinated by the FBI at the age of 21.

In the 1970s, campuses rocked with protests to demand the inclusion of the histories, literature and other contributions of Black people and other people of color in school curricula.

So it is fitting that we discuss the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education, as it continues the legacy of the struggles of Black and other oppressed students and youth in the 1960s and 1970s. The ruling class today is attempting to use the economic and political crises to roll back the gains won by those struggles.

They're trying to make students and youth pay for the instability of the capitalist system by raising our tuitions and slashing school budgets. Here in New York, they're closing at least 19 K-12 [kindergarten through 12th grade] schools and raising tuition at the City University of New York and State University of New York schools. CUNY has historically been the college sys-

tem for working youth of color, one that was once free after students fought for and won the right to education.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority wants to cut the free student MetroCards that K-12 students use to get to and from school each day — here in New York the subways are the equivalent of school buses in other parts of the country. The MTA uses students as pawns to negotiate for more money from the state. High school students have been protesting in the hundreds in demonstrations across the city.

In places like Arizona, they're whipping up racism to eliminate ethnic studies programs. The ruling class knows all too well that these are programs that ultimately teach us our legacy of resistance to oppression and repression.

We learn these legacies to steel ourselves for future struggle, so that we can see where we've come from, how we did it, and where we have to go. We honor these legacies not by remembering them, but by continuing them.

March 4 is where we're going next. Like the student civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was about so much more than rights for students, the March 4 demonstrations are also about more than the right to education. March 4 has really become a nationwide mobilization against the economic crisis. It's becoming an action against all the budget cuts, in schools and other social services.

The demonstrations will challenge the increased privatization of K-12 schools — which President Barack Obama is trying to push with the drive for charter schools — as well as budget cuts, layoffs, furloughs, tuition increases and student loan debt.

March 4 actions are being endorsed by unions across the country — the Professional Staff Congress at CUNY, with 20,000 faculty and adjunct lecturers, recently endorsed. The Transport Workers Union had a meeting to build support for the event. In California, the executive

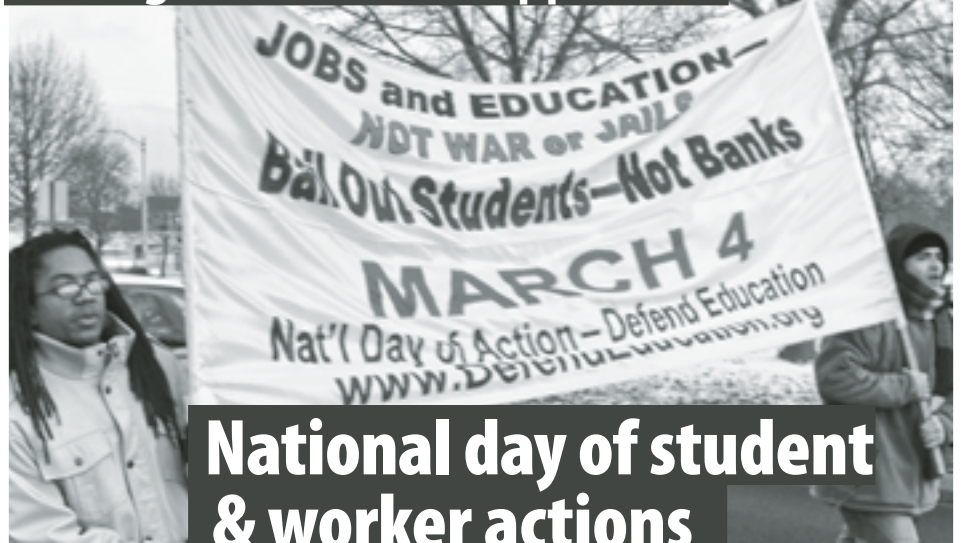
board of the San Francisco Labor Council has endorsed, as has the American Federation of Teachers Local 2121, the California Faculty Association, the United Educators of San Francisco and the California Teachers Association. Many student organizations have also endorsed throughout the country.

In Baltimore, students with the Algebra Project are planning to march to a youth detention center to challenge "the school-to-prison pipeline." In Baltimore, \$300 million is slated to refurbish youth prisons. The Algebra Project is demanding that \$100 million of that money go to youth jobs.

Here in New York, feeder marches are being planned throughout the city that will converge for a major march from Gov. Paterson's office to the MTA. K-12, as well as college and university students, teachers, parents and families are all expected to participate.

The youth group FIST was instrumental in initially raising the idea of a nationwide protest to defend education, and has been equally instrumental in the organizing of that effort. All of us — whether you're a youth or student, educator, parent or ally — have to seize this moment and join full force in the effort to make March 4 a success. □

## Michigan tour builds support for



Larry Hales, left.

**By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Detroit**

In an effort to help mobilize actions in Michigan for the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education, organizer and FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) leader Larry Hales engaged a diverse range of student-workers at numerous locations during an exciting tour of the state Feb. 1-4.

The tour, organized in conjunction with Detroit FIST, kicked off Feb. 1 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor at the William Monroe Trotter Cultural Center, a building originally won in the early 1970s by Black students and their allies on that campus by protests, occupations and a strike led by the Black Action Movement.

"While students are on the move nationally, which is evident in the growth of

*Continued on page 8*

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G PFEIFER

## National day of student &amp; worker actions



# Globalization batters Bangladesh

By Sara Flounders

Are the global problems of grinding poverty, illiteracy and hunger faced by a majority of the world's population a mere accident of history? Is the enormous inequality and underdevelopment of the formerly colonized countries of Africa and Asia due solely to the crimes of conquest by European colonial powers 100 and 200 years ago?

Or does U.S. imperialism and modern finance capital in the drive to maximize profits bear the greatest responsibility for continuing and actually intensifying this historic inequality?

These are the questions that were discussed again and again during a visit to Bangladesh to attend the convention of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh as 2009 ended.

Following the party's dynamic convention in Dhaka, the Socialist Party of Bangladesh made every effort to introduce the international delegates to as much of the struggle around the country as possible.

The SPB-arranged trip was accompanied by party General Secretary Khalequzaman and several other party leaders from the capital, Dhaka, a densely populated city of 14 million, to Chittagong, the industrial port — a city of 4 million. The U.S. military continues to pressure Bangladesh to grant port facilities and landing rights at this strategic seaport on the Bay of Bengal.

After attending a rally of about 1,000 people in Chittagong, the international group traveled to the southernmost tip of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal, then to the border of Myanmar, and to an island off the southern tip, where the U.S. is also pressing for a base. Then it proceeded to the east of Dhaka to the tea and rubber plantations of the hills in the Syhlet district. Delegates had the unique opportunity to attend organizing meetings of tea and rubber workers and to meet with activists working to organize garment workers and rickshaw drivers.

The trip was an opportunity to see how the imperialist countries enforce the serious underdevelopment of Bangladesh despite the enormous resources and potential of the country. Delegates were also able to observe the organizing efforts of the party in major cities and rural areas.

Roads were often single lanes of blacktop clogged with old trucks, dangerously overcrowded buses and countless rickshaws. Bicycle rickshaws propelled by human labor provide most transport for people and materials even in the capital, where there are more than 1 million rickshaw drivers in motion almost round the clock. It is a brutal job with no security.



### Lowest pay in the world

Lining the roads of Dhaka are thousands of garment sweatshops, easily identified by the rows of fluorescent lights glowing inside. In the near dark of early morning, millions of garment workers, primarily young women, rush to arrive on time for 12-hour work shifts. It is dark again as they leave.

The pay in Bangladesh for garment workers is the lowest in the world. Garment workers in India, Vietnam and Thailand now earn an average of \$60 a month, a desperately low wage. But in the capitalist race to maximize profits on a global scale Bangladesh now has the largest garment industry in Asia — workers are paid only \$20 per month with no benefits and no job security.

Large retail trading companies in the U.S. and Western Europe give most of the orders for Bangladeshi garment products. A handful of Western banks control the capital funds. The garment industry has been a main source of foreign exchange in Bangladesh for the last 25 years. Women garment workers are now trying to organize for higher pay and improved working conditions.

### Chittagong's ship-breaking yards

The ship-breaking yards of Chittagong service another industry that reflects a globalized market's ruthless exploitation of low wages in Bangladesh. The shipping industry is the backbone of international trade. It is also the source of major environmental toxins.

The SPB arranged to get a few delegates into the internationally notorious yards, along with video cameras. There had been a deadly explosion in one of the yards the day before the international del-

egates arrived in Bangladesh. Security in all the yards was tight.

At high tide a spent vessel is driven onto the beach. It is then pulled apart by thousands of workers laboring with bare hands or using acetylene torch cutters to break huge carriers down into small pieces. Workers wear no helmets, gloves, goggles, restraining harnesses or even shoes.

This inferno of fumes and toxic chemicals creates hellish working conditions. Asbestos, lead, chromates, mercury, metal shards, radiation, noise, intense vibration, and welding and cutting fumes all mix together.

The industry is subject to no environmental laws and no health or safety requirements. No statistics are kept of accidents.

This toxic industry could not exist without the active complicity of the largest shipping conglomerates. Hundreds of ships from cargo vessels, bulk carriers, fish factories to super tankers ride at anchor in the sea waiting to be scrapped at over 70 ship-breaking yards.

Previously ships could be scrapped in two weeks in a modern shipyard using union labor in Britain, Japan, Germany, the U.S. or other countries where ships used to be built. In the last 25 years of the globalized labor market, all this has changed. Breaking up one ship now takes over six months on a beach with unskilled labor. This is now a cheaper way to recycle parts of an aging ship. Thousands of small shops, each selling a few recycled electronic or metal pieces of salvage, line the roads to the ship-breaking yards.

Ever since International Monetary Fund bankers denied credits and forced Bangladesh to shutter its steel plants, Bangladesh depends on ship breaking to meet its domestic steel requirements.

China once had a major ship-breaking industry. But as soon as China began enforcing environmental and safety laws, this dangerous industry became unprofitable there. In international shipping there is a race to find countries where no occupational health and safety standards are enforced and where wages are the lowest — a race to the bottom.

### Tea and rubber workers organize

A major cash crop in Bangladesh, tea is bought and sold on the world market by a handful of large corporations. The tea pickers are mainly women and children. Men do the pruning, cutting and road work.

A high moment of the trip was attending a night meeting of hundreds of workers on an isolated tea plantation in the Syhlet district. Their very moving meeting was a vibrant mix of music, chants and talks of labor conditions. Based on their organizing, the workers at several plantations had finally won a 50 percent pay increase from \$10 a month to \$15 a month. They were determined to win their demands for schools for their children and basic health care.

Ratan Rajequzzaman, a leader of the Socialist Workers Front, explained in depth about both working conditions and organizing efforts.

British colonial plantation owners had imported tea workers from southern India more than 150 years ago. These workers have lived in both cultural and linguistic isolation ever since. They work under conditions of modern-day indentured slaves and depend totally on management for food and all basic necessities. These workers, who are victims of the greatest abuse and discrimination, seldom leave these extensive plantations.

Tea and rubber plantations are often combined, with tea bushes on one side of

the road and rubber trees on the other. Tea plantations are idyllically called "tea gardens." Picnicking in a tea garden is a popular tourist attraction for middle-class and returning Bangladesh immigrants. But picturesque photos of women bending and stooping to pluck tea leaves can hardly convey this backbreaking work or show that there is no protection from dangerous fertilizers and pesticides.

Archaic equipment for drying, shredding and bagging tea leaves exposes an industry that has changed little in decades. But now the old relations are being challenged with new energy.

### Challenging the theft of resources

Along with its focus on labor organizing, the SPB has helped in organizing broad coalitions to challenge the grossly unequal contracts presented by such multinational oil corporations as Chevron, Shell and Conoco for development of Bangladesh's gas, oil and coal resources. The oil giants are demanding contracts of between 6 and 21 percent royalties after exploration costs are met.

On Jan. 12, the final day of the visit, Michael Kramer, representing the International Action Center, was able to participate in human-chain demonstrations challenging these outrageous leases that were organized across the country by the National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas-Natural Resources. (The coalition has also opposed open-pit coal mining, which has resulted in destruction of wide areas of arable lands, water reservoirs and fish ponds.) The human chain was formed at 150 points along the cross-country line from Teknaf, the southernmost city, to Tentulia in the north.

Past challenges to unequal and secret leasing of national resources have led to important victories. A long march from Dhaka to Chittagong led to the cancellation of a 199-year lease of the country's main seaport to a U.S. company.

In Bangladesh despite its enormous problems, made much worse by the global capitalist market, there are revolutionary forces who are confident that, with socialist planning and the creative involvement of the most oppressed and lowest paid workers in the world, the challenges to develop their rich resources are solvable in ways that will benefit the whole population. □

## Mich. tour builds support for National day of student & worker actions

*Continued from page 7*

the March 4 National Day of Action, it is the linkage of the student movement with workers that is imperative," Hales said at the Ann Arbor meeting.

Students at Mumford High School in Detroit heard Hales at a Black History Month Forum on Feb. 2. Mumford, once known nationwide as a stellar school, has been devastated by budget cuts, the defunding of public education and the elimination of affirmative action in Michigan. Many seats in the auditorium where Hales spoke were broken and unusable and students had to enter the school through metal detectors, have their backpacks searched by private security guards and their bodies searched with electronic wands.

Hales engaged the students with a wide scope of revolutionary Black history. He called for the students to join in the organizing for March 4, to resist their oppres-



WWW PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



## Italy and Germany

# Autoworkers resist plant closings

By Martha Grevatt

As in the U.S., autoworkers in Europe are confronted with a capitalist restructuring agenda that involves plant closings and mass layoffs. Workers are fighting back on more than one front.

Upon learning on Jan. 21 that General Motors' Opel division would close their assembly plant, union members in Antwerp, Belgium, blockaded the parking lot and prevented new vehicles from leaving the premises. As of this writing, round-the-clock picketing is still holding up vehicle transport.

The 2,600 workers at the Opel plant are outraged at GM's decision to close their plant later this year. Recently workers agreed to take pay cuts, while the Belgian government assisted in the transatlantic GM bailout, to the tune of half a billion euros. For 85 years GM has made profits off the backs of the Antwerp workers.

The Labor Party of Belgium has launched a solidarity campaign, engaging in mass distribution of cards and signs with the slogan, "Don't touch my job." Thousands have signed an online petition in solidarity with the Belgian GM workers. ([www.solidarityforopelantwerp.be](http://www.solidarityforopelantwerp.be))

The Opel workers were inspired by the two-week blockade of Anheuser-Busch InBev — maker of the world-famous Stella Artois beer — that succeeded in halting that company's plans to axe 10 percent of the workforce.

Meanwhile, on Feb. 3 Italian autoworkers staged a four-hour nationwide strike to warn Fiat against closing the Termini Imerese plant, which employs 1,400 workers on the island of Sicily. This was the latest of a number of militant protests intended to keep the Sicilian plant open.

"Termini Imerese should not be shut down," said union leader Gianni Rinaldini. "There is no overcapacity in Italy." (Agence France-Presse, Feb. 3)

The Feb. 3 shutdown was the first strike affecting all of Fiat's 80,000 Italian employees since 2004 — the year Sergio Marchionne became CEO and launched a "turnaround" plan to produce more vehicles with fewer workers. As the new CEO of Chrysler, Marchionne is closing plants and reducing the U.S. workforce as well.

Prompted by the determination of the Fiat workers to defend their right to their jobs, the Italian government is considering ending federal subsidies to the company unless it reverses the decision to close Termini Imerese. □



On Feb. 3, Italian autoworkers staged a four-hour nationwide strike against Fiat at Termini Imerese plant, which employs 1,400 workers on the island of Sicily.

## Workers in Europe battle austerity programs

By G. Dunkel

Contagion and uncertainty worry the capitalists worldwide after the European Commission accepted Greece's economic recovery plan. Whether this plan will resolve the Greek government's huge deficit, which is about 12.7 percent of the total production of Greece's economy, is unclear.

Even if the plan itself works, it is clear that the Greek working population will actively reject it. It is even clearer that Goldman Sachs, the big U.S. bank, will have problems selling 53 billion euros (now \$73 billion) in bonds to provide the financing Greece needs by the end of June.

What will happen to Portugal and Spain's economy if Greece's goes into a tailspin and Greece defaults on its payments? It always creates a very sticky situation when "sovereign" debt — that is, government debt on bonds issued in a currency that is not the national currency — is involved, and the government cannot pay the debt by simply printing the money, as the U.S. government does. Gretchen Morgenstern, the chief economics columnist for the New York Times, writes that it is unlikely that the economic problems of these countries will remain confined to the euro zone. (Feb. 7)

The Feb. 7 Wall Street Journal, another authoritative organ of the U.S. ruling class, claims that "worries about Greece's debt woes sparked wild swings in the U.S. stock market last week. Signs that the trouble in the Greek bond market was infecting others in Europe helped send the Dow Jones Industrial Average into a spiral" downward on Feb. 4 and 5.

While the plan Greece submitted to the EC contains a lot of nonsense about transparency, credibility, monitoring and reforming structures, the heart of the plan is cutting employment in the civil service. It demands a hiring freeze in 2010, a rule that only one new worker be hired for every five who retire from 2011 onward, salary cuts of 10 percent, and no increases in wages over 2,000 euros (\$2,700) a month.

### Greek, Portuguese workers protest cuts

Working people in Greece are already responding with vigorous protests to this "recovery" plan, which is a harsh attack on their wages, pensions and social services.

Greek farmers just wound down a three-week-long tractor "clog-in" where they used their tractors to block many of the main roads leading north to Bulgaria. Tax and custom collectors held a two-day strike Feb. 4 and 5, which meant that imports were held up at the border. Civil servants are striking Feb. 10, and a general strike is planned for the last part of February.

This is the "contagion" that Europe's capitalist class really fears — militant labor union struggles in the street.

In Lisbon, Portugal, 50,000 civil servants protested Feb. 5 against a freeze on public sector wages, aimed at making the workers pay for the spiraling public deficit. Government workers' real wages have declined by 6 percent since 2000. The workers demanded a 4.5 percent wage increase.

Portugal's government had announced it was freezing all public sector wages as part of the 2010 budget, while pursuing a policy of replacing only one of every two government workers who leave.

"This protest is about showing that workers are unhappy. These 50,000 people came to tell the government it has to change its right-wing policies," said Ana Avoila of the Common Front union movement, which held the protest. (AP, Feb. 5)

"The government doesn't want to resolve the crisis — it just wants to use it as an excuse to penalize workers," charged Secretary-General of the Portuguese Communist Party Jeronimo de Sousa, who joined the protest.

Portugal's deficit hit 9.3 percent last year, its highest since 1974, and this triggered the hedge funds' and big banks' concerns that Portugal might follow Greece into default.

After the demonstration in Lisbon, the opposition parties defeated the government's austerity plan and passed their own bill on Feb. 5 that lets the country's local regions use deficit spending to stimulate the economy.

The economies of two of the poorest countries in the Euro zone are suffering from their debt load and the world capitalist crisis. But the working class is struggling against the capitalists' attempt to pay for the crisis by imposing austerity on the workers. □

*Continued from page 8*

sive conditions and to protest the military recruiters in their school.

"I follow in the footsteps of Denmark Vesey, John Brown, Gabriel Prosser, Malcolm X and Fred Hampton. I'm a political activist, a revolutionary," Hales told the Mumford students.

He added, "You should not have to go to a school with metal detectors, with chairs in this auditorium that don't work or to join the military to kill people that look just like you. We're sick and tired of being treated like criminals. We can win but we have to fight and struggle for human needs"

On Feb. 3 Hales joined the student organizations Alleleft, the Undergraduate Alliance and the Michigan State University chapter of Students for a Democratic Society at a rally at the East Lansing campus. Activists gathered at the MSU administration building to protest education cuts and then marched five miles to the state Capitol building in Lansing.

All along the march route the students and their allies were menaced by cops but stood their ground chanting and hoisting their placards and banners. A March 4 banner declared, "Jobs and Education: Not War and Jails! Bail Out the Students — Not the Banks!"

Upon entering the state Capitol grounds, the students were welcomed by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, which was having a rally at the Capitol to demand that Gov. Jennifer Granholm issue an immediate state of economic emergency in Michigan and declare a moratorium on foreclosures, evictions and utility cutoffs. Granholm was inside giving her final "state of the state" address as governor.

Members of the student organizations and Moratorium NOW! joined forces to directly confront the racist Tea Party members who had been given a permit to rally on the Capitol steps. Directly confronting the racists and then the state cops who formed a line between the two

groups to protect the Tea Party, students and their allies chanted "Power to the students! Power to the workers!" and other slogans.

After the Capitol actions, a meeting organized by SDS took place at MSU. As at the Ann Arbor meeting, students discussed possible actions for March 4 in East Lansing and statewide and shared literature and contacts for mobilizing purposes.

On Feb. 4 Hales addressed a noon class at Wayne County Community College in downtown Detroit, where a lively conversation about contemporary economic, social and political issues took place. Leaflets were given to the students and discussion ensued about possible March 4 organizing activities in Detroit.

Wrapping up his tour at an evening meeting on Feb. 4 at the Detroit FIST and Moratorium NOW! office, Hales described his tour and encouraged the audience to build March 4 activities in Detroit and statewide. Other speakers included members of the Restaurant Opportunities Center-United and the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. A multinational group of labor, community and student activists from various cities in Michigan participated in the meeting.

Said Hales at the Feb. 4 meeting: "Detroit is a city with boarded-up schools, shuttered factories, boarded-up homes, no grocery stores and closed businesses. The children of Detroit and their families have long been neglected and abused by the conditions of the system. The prospect of linking the struggle of the unemployed and underemployed and the attacks against workers, which include foreclosures and evictions and the attacks on public education, with the student struggle is greatest in Detroit. This points the way for the direction of the struggle that is needed to win worker and student power."

For more information on March 4 organizing, visit [defendededucation.org](http://defendededucation.org) or [fistyouth.wordpress.com](http://fistyouth.wordpress.com). □



# Protest on March 20

In the year since President Barack Obama became commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces, several assumptions made earlier by millions of people who wanted no more wars — in the Middle East or elsewhere — have fallen.

So many placards and puppets carried at anti-war demonstrations before the election focused on President George W. Bush’s personality as the reason for the brutal and illegal invasions and occupations that were mercilessly beating down resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bush was seen as shrewd but oafish — the war as a terrible mistake made by a crude, selfish and unprincipled man with narrow horizons. And, of course, there was always the sinister figure of Vice President Dick Cheney.

Now there is a very different presidential team in the White House. But the wars go on as before, even if the rationale given for them is more finessed and the patriotism not quite as blatantly jingoistic as before. Indeed, this Democratic administration is putting even more money into the pockets of the military-industrial-banking complex and has widened its wars to include Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen and a huge armada around Iran.

An election has never stopped a war. Forces much more powerful than mere elected officials are behind the gigantic Pentagon machine. It should be remembered that it was Richard Nixon — no flaming liberal, he! — who finally presided over the end of the Vietnam War. Like Bush, this criminal in the White House had tried every dirty trick to stay in office and justify the war. But during his presidency demonstrations were being supplemented with desertion, refusal to fight, and militant, mass action by youth and active-duty soldiers.

The Vietnamese continued to fight heroically, the world was outraged, and the U.S. ruling class finally decided it couldn’t win. So Nixon became the “statesman” who presided over the final pullout of troops.

It has taken some time — time in which tens of thousands of people have died — for the reality to sink in that the change of administrations is not going to bring an end to the Iraq war. In this period, the workers in the United States have been hit with the worst capitalist recession since the 1930s — one in which a short-lived recovery for the stock market brought no recovery to the job market, despite colossal bailouts to the banks and brokerage houses by the Obama administration.

While the wars grind on, public sector jobs are disappearing as states face huge budget cuts. On the federal level, the budget is being balanced on the backs of the workers even as Obama exempts the military from any freeze on spending.

The wars abroad and the economic misery at home cannot be viewed separately. They are two sides of the same coin. In both cases, the predatory class of super-rich exploiters is using the state to protect and guarantee its monstrous profits while the workers, in uniform or in civvies, are expected to put their money and their lives on the line.

The anti-war demonstrations in Washington and elsewhere called for March 20, the seventh anniversary of the Pentagon’s “shock-and-awe” assault on Iraq, will be an important gauge of whether the movement has been able to regain momentum in the new political environment.

Workers World endorses the March 20 actions, and will be participating in them around the country. □

## Tenants’ rally tells banks ‘Hands off our homes!’

By Paddy Colligan  
New York

Holding signs demanding “Save our homes” and “Stop displacement of working families,” some 700 tenants of New York City’s iconic middle-income housing projects, Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, protested on a cold Sunday morning Jan. 31 to demand their rights following the latest twist in the development’s ownership saga.

After five decades in the hands of its original owner, Met Life, the twin apartment complexes were sold for more than \$5 billion in 2006, at the height of the real estate boom. The value of the complexes has now plummeted to less than \$2 billion. In December, the owners, Tishman Speyer and Black Rock, failed to make the monthly \$16 million payment to their creditors, in effect walking away from a very large underwater mortgage.

The consequence of this disastrous real estate deal could be the eviction of the 11,000 current tenants. Late last year, tenants won a significant legal victory over the landlords by getting 4,000 apartments

placed back under rent regulation, after the landlords had managed to remove the apartments by using loopholes in the regulations.

The combative Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenants Association, representing approximately 30,000 tenants, has fought the owners of the complex for years. In the 1960s it fought to integrate the project, which had been built in the late 1940s to attract white returning veterans and their families. In recent years the struggle has turned to preserving “affordable housing” in Manhattan, a borough of New York that is increasingly polarized along economic and class lines.

Rent protections were established in many U.S. cities to prevent price gouging during the housing shortages of World War II. They still exist in New York City, though in a much weakened form with a shortage of decent, affordable housing. In a year and a half, however, these rent protections are up for renewal or termination. Tenant associations are gearing up for what will be a hard-fought struggle to maintain access to affordable housing. □

## Under the boot of U.S. occupation

# Haiti’s ongoing struggle to recover

By Monica Moorehead

As the people of Haiti continue heroic efforts to recover from the Jan. 12 devastating earthquake that has claimed at least 200,000 lives, they are facing a new challenge — an occupation of 13,000 U.S. troops and advanced weaponry. This new occupation was sanctioned by the United Nations on Jan. 22 without any say from the Haitians themselves.

The main goal of these troops is not to assist in any kind of humanitarian aid for the Haitian people but rather to extend U.S. imperialism’s economic influence in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America. While the Haitian people need food, doctors, clean water, housing and the technology to rebuild their infrastructure in the capital of Port-au-Prince and throughout the island nation, once again the U.S. has contributed nothing but arrogance and terror to a people who first won their independence in 1804 from the French colonizers who enslaved them.

The fact that President Barack Obama appointed former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to oversee the U.S. presence in Haiti exposes the hypocrisy of the U.S. government’s concern for the Haitian people. Under the Clinton administration, U.S. Marines illegally removed from office the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in 1994. Under the Bush regime, President Aristide was kidnapped from Haiti in 2004. Now exiled in South Africa, President Aristide has made a strong public appeal to be allowed to return to Haiti to help his people in the aftermath of the earthquake.

On Feb. 5, an estimated 300 people confronted Clinton in Port-au-Prince to complain that the U.S. had not carried out its promises to bring immediate aid to the Haitian people. The previous day, the French-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) stated that a photographer from Le Nouvelliste, the oldest and largest mainstream Haitian daily, had a camera physically taken from him by six U.S. Marines. The reporter, Homère Cardichon, was taking photos of a protest by Haitians at the U.S. ambassador’s home in the capital.

“Six Marines come up and surrounded me,” Cardichon told RSF. “Then they took my camera in my opened work bag and left with it. An hour later, one of them came back and photographed me. Then he returned my camera to me. I saw that the soldiers had erased some of the photos.”

The RSF denounced the Marines’ actions as “a flagrant act of censorship,” stating that “news and information is vital for reconstruction in Haiti and for the efforts of its citizens to start rebuilding their lives.” (RSF, Feb. 4)

There is another reason why the U.S. sent thousands of Marines to Haiti: to contain any efforts being made on the part of the Haitians to reconstruct and rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the

earthquake crisis. This was confirmed in a Feb. 5 letter sent by Mary Ellen McNish, general secretary of the American Friends Service Committee.

The letter reads in part: “I’m glad to report that AFSC’s assessment team has returned safely from Haiti, where they spent time in Port-au-Prince viewing firsthand the immense devastation of the capital city. They report that the formal structures that keep a country running were very hard hit, especially because many government ministers and mid-level civil servants died in the quake. Many institutions that were the pillars of the community, such as churches, medical facilities and schools, were badly damaged or were destroyed.

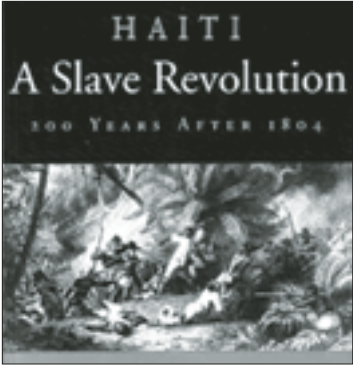
“According to Jorge Lafitte, AFSC Regional Director of Latin America, the situation in Haiti is not like other disasters to which AFSC has recently responded. The destruction of the capital city and the collapse of the Haitian middle class, who sustain the country, make this a very different crisis.

“However, some of the poorest areas in the city were not as greatly affected because buildings there are not large permanent structures and were not as lethal if they fell. People in these areas have slowly returned to informal systems of survival and our team noted that there seemed to be little violence and looting.

“A variety of makeshift solutions has developed from formal camps of 80-100,000 people to smaller groups of 700-1,000 banding together where they can. Some residents are camping in front of their destroyed homes. In talking with them, our team found that people hope they will reconstruct their houses and it is safer to stay close by.

“Geri Sicola, Associate General Secretary for International Programs, was able to visit one of the three centers where AFSC is providing emergency assistance to people living in a makeshift shelter on the grounds of a school. On that day more than 600 people were provided a meal. Our partner, Swiss Interchurch Aid, is using a private home’s kitchen to produce the food — an example of the practical and generous gestures being made by so many Haitians in this crisis. The meals include rice, beans, vegetables, and the ingredients are purchased locally or in the Dominican Republic, bolstering local economies.” (<http://tinyurl.com/yfbmaht>)

On Feb. 6, the BBC reported that the G7 group — the seven richest capitalist countries, including the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan — announced that they were writing off Haiti’s debt of more than \$1 billion. Not only should Haiti’s debt be cancelled by these countries and the imperialist banks, but reparations in the billions of dollars should be paid to the Haitian people for the theft of their resources and labor over the centuries. □



**“Haiti: A Slave Revolution, 200 Years after 1804”** was published in 2004 as a joint project of the International Action Center and the Haiti Support Network. It is not a traditional history book or textbook, but a people’s history. In the preface the editors state: “This book is going to combat 200 years of racist indoctrination and propaganda about the Haitian Revolution. It is essential to challenge these stereotypes in order to build true, informed solidarity with Haiti.” Currently out of print, “Haiti: A Slave Revolution” can be read online at [www.iacenter.org/haiti](http://www.iacenter.org/haiti).



# U.S. occupation in Afghanistan, Pakistan reaches new moment of truth

By John Catalinotto

Statements from both the U.S.-NATO occupation command and the spokespeople of the Afghan resistance indicate that a military showdown looms in Helmand province of Afghanistan, specifically in the Marjah area. At the same time, the deaths of three U.S. operatives in Pakistan — either Special Forces or mercenary “contractors” — exposes the growing U.S. military involvement in that nuclear-armed country of 170 million people.

The Obama administration announced its escalation of the Afghan occupation last fall. If the attack proceeds and the resistance stands and fights, this escalation will bring a new level of casualties in what the Pentagon calls “the Af-Pak region.”

In Afghanistan, the U.S.-NATO forces and their client Afghan regime, led by President Hamid Karzai, are carrying out a two-pronged offensive.

One prong is the looming attack on Marjah, set for mid-February. Thousands of NATO and Afghan puppet troops, led by U.S. Marines just sent to the area, are supposed to strike Marjah and drive the resistance out of its most secure base. Reports are that 2,000 of the 80,000 people residing on the Marjah plain have been taking refuge in the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, to avoid the fighting.

U.S. Gen. Stanley McChrystal says the offensive is aimed at clearing the region of the resistance fighters so that forces allied with the Karzai government can take control.

According to U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, NATO has publicized the assault “[to let] people know what’s coming in the hope that the hardcore Taliban, or a lot of the Taliban, will simply leave, and maybe there will be less of a fight.” (Reuters, Feb. 7)

The refugees, however, say that the resistance fighters have been digging in. “The Taliban are not going to leave Marjah. We have seen them preparing themselves. They are bringing in people and weapons. We know there is going to be a big fight,” said Abdul Manan, a refugee from the Marjah area. (Reuters, Feb. 7)

Mulla Sharfuddin, Taliban commander in Helmand, told the Afghan Islamic Press by phone, “Taliban are not afraid of the planned major offensive by foreign forces in Helmand. We are happy that foreigners would come out of their bases and our fighters would attack them.”

Sharfuddin, who said the Taliban have popular support, also denied the U.S.-NATO propaganda that accused the resistance of funding themselves with the sale of illegal drugs. “The Taliban had banned drug cultivation during their rule,” he said. (www.thenews.com.pk)

## U.S., Karzai try to bribe Taliban

The other prong of the offensive is Karzai’s alleged offers to negotiate a settlement and at the same time to offer Taliban troops jobs. Washington, up to now, has refused to admit it is attempting to negotiate with the Taliban or other resistance

forces. It is hard to see, however, how Karzai could pursue a serious diplomatic maneuver without support from the U.S., as his puppet regime is completely dependent on Washington for funds, weapons and armed protection.

U.S. imperialism will always look for ways to divide the forces fighting it. This is especially true when it becomes impossible for the U.S. occupation forces to win militarily. Thus the talk of “giving Taliban fighters jobs” implies that the occupation is in trouble.

Also unconvincing is the argument that most of the resistance fighters are simply mercenaries, fighting for pay. This seems especially weak when applied to the resistance fighters who take on suicide missions.

Washington, on the other hand, is becoming more and more dependent on mercenary forces to fight its colonial wars.

## ‘Special forces’ killed in Pakistan battle

Investigative reporter and writer Jeremy Scahill, who writes about the increased use of mercenary troops to carry out U.S. military adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, wrote Feb. 4 about the deaths of three U.S. “special forces” in northwest Pakistan. (www.thenation.com)

“The soldiers died Wednesday in Lower Dir when their convoy was hit by a car bomber in what appeared to be a targeted strike against the Americans. According to CENTCOM, the U.S. soldiers were in the country on a mission to train the Pakistani Frontier,” he wrote. “Capt. Jack Hanzlik,

a spokesman for the United States Central Command said there are about 200 U.S. military personnel in Pakistan.” About 60 to 100 of these are “trainers.”

Scahill argues that the increased presence of these “trainers” is usually a precursor to landing larger numbers of regular U.S. troops. He also points out that much of the training work is being carried out by mercenary troops. In Pakistan these are Blackwater (or as it is now called, Xe) operatives working as subcontractors to a Pakistani firm, Kestral Logistics.

A Pakistani-Taliban spokesperson, Azim Tariq, also pointed to mercenaries: “We know the movement of U.S. Marines and Blackwater guys and we have prepared suicide bombers to go after them.” (The Nation, Feb. 4)

The increased U.S. intervention in the region is causing changes also among anti-imperialist forces. In Pakistan in January, there was a meeting of many different tendencies of the Pakistani left that have been divided for years, but who have now agreed to found an “Anti-Imperialist Front.”

In Afghanistan, U.S. propaganda calls everyone in the resistance “Taliban.” Other observers point out, however, that while the Taliban is the major organized force in the Afghan resistance, there are many others involved. Not all of these forces are fundamentalist and some are even secular and Marxist. They don’t exist now as a united liberation front, but all want to chase the U.S. and NATO out of Afghanistan — and out of the entire region. □

## ‘Daughter of the nation’

# Pakistanis protest conviction of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui

By Sara Flounders  
New York

Militant organized demonstrations of outrage and anger took place throughout Pakistan when news of a guilty verdict for Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was announced on Feb. 3. A jury in a New York federal court found Siddiqui guilty of seven counts, including attempted murder and armed assault without premeditation.

Siddiqui’s trial had been front-page news for weeks in Pakistan. Civil rights, religious and women’s organizations marched, demanding the return of this “daughter of the nation” to Pakistan.

The U.S.-educated doctor of neuroscience has come to symbolize the many hundreds of Pakistanis who have been secretly disappeared, detained and tortured, as well as the national outrage at the continuing deadly U.S. drone attacks. In 2003, at the age of 30, Siddiqui disappeared along with her three children from a street in Karachi.

Many in Pakistan had hoped that the overwhelming lack of any evidence would result in a not-guilty verdict. The prosecution could produce no bullets, bullet holes, injuries, fingerprints or residue to tie Siddiqui to attempted murder of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

The Hollywood image of “fairness” and “innocence until proven guilty” in U.S. courts are powerful illusions. But the verdict was no surprise to anyone who has followed the frame-up trials of hundreds



Dr. Siddiqui asserts that she was tortured for years in secret prisons.

of U.S. political prisoners. Given that the U.S. has the largest prison population in the world, in addition to thousands in secret prisons, Siddiqui’s assertion that she was tortured for years in secret prisons is all too believable.

The government charges were preposterous. Siddiqui had supposedly been arrested

in July 2008, five years after her disappearance. The U.S. claims that when U.S. military personnel came to interrogate her after the arrest, Siddiqui grabbed a U.S. soldier’s M4 gun, fired off two rounds and shot herself while being subdued.

Questions of how the bullets failed to hit a single one of the 20 to 30 people in the small, crowded room, or hit any wall or floor, or leave any residue were never answered. Witness testimonies often contradicted their earlier sworn testimonies and the testimony of others. The prosecution urged the jury to ignore science and irrefutable facts and believe the contradictory testimony of U.S. Special Forces soldiers and FBI agents.

Despite all claims of impartiality, U.S. Judge Richard M. Berman limited the entire case to what happened in the two-minute period of Siddiqui’s interrogation. Siddiqui’s disappearance, torture and missing children could not be addressed.

Although Siddiqui was never charged with terrorism, claims that she wanted to blow up sites in New York City were repeatedly raised. Fear and endless vague charges of terrorism were the most pow-

erful weapons the government had. They were not restricted from using them.

The courtroom atmosphere was one of siege. Every attempt at intimidation and fear was used. There were double checkpoints for entry into the courtroom, and anyone attending the trial had his or her home address and driver’s license number recorded. Nevertheless, the courtroom was packed every day of the trial, and overflow rooms with video conferencing of the trial were required.

Siddiqui’s supporters in New York City admire her enormous intransigence and determination after a year and a half of solitary confinement, usually under ter-

rrible conditions and after suffering life-threatening wounds from the U.S. shooting, followed by brutal and humiliating strip searches before any visit or courtroom appearance. In the face of all this Siddiqui clearly rejected her trial and the whole image that what took place in the New York courtroom was about fairness, truth or justice.

**Free Dr. Aafia Siddiqui!  
Return her home to Pakistan!**

**Free all secretly detained  
and tortured prisoners!**

*Flounders attended parts of Siddiqui’s trial.*

## Youth played pivotal role

*Continued from page 7*

exploitation in the automotive industry. These struggles were soon linked to the efforts of community organizers and students who were waging battles around education issues, housing and police brutality.

The National Black Economic Development Conference was held in Detroit in April 1969, where the demand for reparations was put forward when Forman issued the Black Manifesto, calling for massive compensation for centuries of slavery and national oppression. Forman would soon join the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which grew out of the African-American independent labor struggles of the period in Detroit and around the country.

The students at Wayne State Univer-

sity in Detroit took control of the campus newspaper and turned it into the official publication of the LRBW. The daily newspapers published on campus were distributed at plant gates and within the African-American community.

These developments illustrated clearly the necessity for the student movement to merge with the broader movement of workers against capitalism and national oppression.

The student activists of the present period must learn from the struggles of the 1960s. By linking the cutbacks in education to the overall economic crisis of capitalism, students and youth can become an important force in the burgeoning movement against the most aggressive attacks against the working class since the Great Depression. □



## EDITORIAL

# Comprando elecciones

Una decisión votada 5 a 4 por la Corte Suprema estadounidense el 21 de enero eliminó las restricciones de financiamiento corporativo para los anuncios de las campañas electorales a nivel federal, entregándoles a los capitalistas el derecho ilimitado de comprar elecciones. La decisión era en defensa del derecho a la “libertad de palabra” de capitalistas como Exxon-Mobil, AT&T, Goldman Sachs, Citigroup y las industrias de seguros, farmacéuticas, mega-médicas, militar-aeroespacial, de comunicaciones y otras industrias cuyos puntos de vista predominan totalmente los medios de difusión.

Al abrir las puertas a la propaganda corporativa y a los candidatos políticos auspiciados por las corporaciones, la Corte Suprema también decidió eliminar los límites de gastos de los sindicatos para las campañas electorales. ¡Vaya igualdad! Según el sitio [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), las contribuciones a favor de las corporaciones por parte de individuos y del Comité de Acción Política para los candidatos de 2007/2008 sobrepasaron las contribuciones de los Comités de Acción Política de los sindicatos 15 a 1. Esa cifra no incluye el dinero para anuncios sobre cuestiones específicas y otros gastos.

La diferencia entre el enorme dispendio de las corporaciones y las contribuciones de los sindicatos no debe sorprender a nadie, al tomar en cuenta cómo los capitalistas acumulan cifras inigualables de dinero al explotar la labor de los/as trabajadores/as tanto organizados/as como no organizados/as en los Estados Unidos y alrededor del mundo. La Corte Suprema aumentó aún más esta desigualdad.

El movimiento sindical tiene el derecho de abogar por cuestiones que tienen que ver con los/as trabajadores/as, dentro y fuera de la arena electoral — y anhelamos también que tengan sus propios/as candidatos/as. Gastos record de los sindicatos ayudaron a ganar la histórica elección del primer presidente africano americano y también las aplastantes mayorías demócratas en las dos casas del congreso. Pero estos éxitos electorales no han servido de nada para fortalecer la posición del sector obrero.

Al Acta de Elecciones Libres de Empleados/as (EFCA por las siglas en inglés) le fue removida la provisión vital de optar por representación sindical al firmar una tarjeta, y ahora está moribunda en el congreso. La iniciativa para reformar el sistema de salud negó desde el principio cualquier posibilidad de pasar un plan de “pagador único”, es decir, Medicare para todos/as. Más tarde aceptó establecer un plan de seguro administrado por el gobierno para competir con las compañías de seguros; de hecho, si pasa a ser ley, será un subsidio para las compañías de seguros y para la industria de la salud. No se ha pasado ningún programa real de empleos. La guerra y la ocupación de Irak y Afganistán continúan. La agenda de las corporaciones sigue predominando.

La decisión de la Corte Suprema obstaculiza aún más cualquier apariencia de “democracia” en los Estados Unidos. ¿Recibirán otros/as candidatos/as aparte de los republicanos y demócratas fondos sin restricciones? ¿Qué clase de oportunidad tendrán los/as candidatos/as progresistas, independientes o de la clase trabajadora para diseminar su mensaje? El poder aparecer en el padrón electoral es ya un asunto prohibitivo y costoso para los/as candidatos/as que representan a los/as trabajadores/as y oprimidos/as.

El himno del movimiento sindical “Por siempre solidaridad” nos recuerda que en las manos de los/as trabajadores/as está un poder más grande que todo el oro acumulado por las corporaciones. Al utilizar los grandes aunque limitados recursos de los sindicatos para movilizar a la clase trabajadora multinacional para luchar por sí misma — incluyendo a los/as trabajadores/as documentados/as e indocumentados/as, los/as desempleados/as y subempleados/as; los/as jóvenes; y las comunidades amenazadas con ejecuciones hipotecarias, desalojos y cierres de servicios utilitarios — se puede romper el poderío de las campañas compradas por las corporaciones y su cabildeo. Así la clase capitalista perderá su dominio no solamente sobre el congreso y las elecciones, sino también sobre la clase trabajadora.

□

# Clinton, Google y la guerra fría cibernética contra China

Por Gary Wilson

¿Ha declarado una guerra fría cibernética contra China la Secretaria de Estado Hillary Clinton?

El 21 de enero Clinton pronunció un discurso titulado “Libertad de Internet”. Los noticieros asocian este discurso a un reporte publicado recientemente por Google donde se decía que Google había sido objeto de ataques cibernéticos desde China.

Lo que no se dijo en la mayoría de los reportajes, pero que China y sus noticieros sí notaron, fue el resto del discurso. Después de la respuesta de China al discurso, el periódico The New York Times caracterizó el discurso en forma muy diferente a la que hizo en su informe inicial.

“El extenso discurso de Clinton, con sus connotaciones de guerra fría — comparando el telón de información con el Telón de Acero — criticó a varios países, nombrándolos, incluyendo a China, por censurar el Internet. Este fue el primer discurso en el cual un alto oficial de la administración ofrecía una visión para hacer de la libertad del Internet, una parte integral de la política del exterior”. (NYT, 22 de enero)

Este discurso se puede encontrar en su totalidad en la web del Departamento de Estado. Está lleno de agresivas referencias de la guerra fría sobre el Muro de Berlín y de un “Telón de Acero sobre la información”, al igual que otras retóricas reminiscentes de la guerra fría, tal y como un discurso del Departamento de Estado durante los años de Reagan.

Las declaraciones de Clinton se dan luego del anuncio que hizo el secretario de guerra del Pentágono, Robert Gates siete meses antes, el 23 de junio del año pasado, cuando dijo que se ha creado un nuevo ‘comercio’ militar con el propósito de conducir guerras cibernéticas.

El discurso de Clinton no es explícitamente una declaración de guerra, sino una proclamación de la hegemonía de Estados Unidos sobre el Internet.

La confrontación de Google pudo haber sido o no el catalizador para que diera el discurso en esa fecha. A comienzos de enero, Google anunció que está revisando sus operaciones comerciales en China por los ataques cibernéticos que alega se originaron en China.

Aunque Google no lo dice directamente, insinúa que el gobierno chino está detrás de los supuestos ataques. La verdad es que Google no sabe la fuente de tales ataques y solo puede trazar los ataques hasta unos servidores en Taiwán, pero todo lo demás es solo suposición.

El abogado principal de Google, David Drummond, dijo el 12 de enero en un blog, “Nosotros tenemos evidencias que sugieren que la principal meta de los atacantes era la de tener acceso a las cuentas de Gmail de activistas de derechos humanos”.

Esta es una declaración reveladora, porque también usa la terminología imperialista de la guerra fría. En la distorsionada terminología del imperialismo, la frase “activistas de derechos humanos” se usa para describir a individuos anti comunistas, particularmente aquellos que activamente buscan derrocar un gobierno que no es dominado o controlado por los Estados Unidos. La frase activista de derechos humanos nunca se usa para describir a aquellos que luchan por la justicia y en contra de la opresión en un estado aliado o cliente de los Estados Unidos.

Una nota interesante sobre los ataques contra Google la proporciona el reportero de Macworld, Robert McMillan, quien dice que los atacantes, para entrar a Google, usaron la puerta trasera requerida por los servicios de seguridad de Estados Unidos que les da acceso para el monitoreo de la actividad en el Internet.

No es probable que Google termine sus negocios en China. China cuenta con 298 millones de usuarios del Internet, según el Centro de Redes del Internet de China; casi el doble que en los EEUU. Google está en el negocio de conseguir “clickers” (usuarios que visitan las páginas de anuncio, apuestas, empleos, etc.) del Internet.

Google parece que está tratando de utilizar este evento para negociar un cambio de sus condiciones comerciales con China. Así como las operaciones de Google en los EEUU que exigen llevar a cabo algunas prácticas costosas para cumplir con las leyes que supuestamente pretenden evitar las prácticas ilegales, así también las operaciones de Google en China deben operar bajo leyes similares.

El discurso de Clinton sin embargo, cambió lo que inicialmente podría haber sido una “disputa comercial”, en algo diferente.

El editorial del diario chino Global Times del 22 de enero lo llama “imperialismo de la información” y dice que la campaña del Internet lanzada por el discurso de Clinton “es un intento encubierto de imponer los valores [de EEUU] en otras culturas a nombre de la democracia.

“Los hechos reales que Clinton no ha logrado poner de relieve en su discurso es que la mayoría de la información que fluye desde los EEUU y otros países occidentales está llena de una retórica agresiva contra los países que no siguen su liderato”, dice Global Times.

“En cambio, en el orden global de la información, los países que están en desventaja no pueden producir el flujo masivo de información requerida, y no pueden competir con los países occidentales en términos de control y difusión de información.

“Teniendo esto en mente, hay que darse cuenta que cuando se trata del contenido, la cantidad, la dirección y el flujo de la información, no hay absolutamente ninguna igualdad ni imparcialidad.

“La libertad en el Internet de acceso irrestricto es por lo tanto, el tráfico en una sola dirección, contrario al espíritu democrático, y está calculado para fortalecer el monopolio”, concluye Global Times. ([opinion.globaltimes.cn](http://opinion.globaltimes.cn))

La exactitud de esta afirmación se ve confirmada por los ataques cibernéticos que se originaron en los EEUU contra el gobierno de Irán. Clinton no mencionó esta censura de Irán, un ataque que cerró durante un corto tiempo toda la información procedente del gobierno iraní. Este ataque del año pasado es bien conocido y fue ampliamente publicado. Clinton, al dejar fuera cualquier mención sobre este ataque cibernético, esta censura de Irán, le dio implícitamente una sanción oficial, tal vez dando a entender que esto es lo que aguarda cualquier país que se oponga a los dictados de los EEUU.

En cuanto a la libertad del Internet y su censura, no hizo mención de la detención por el FBI de los manifestantes contra el G-20 el pasado septiembre en Pittsburgh por haber utilizado Twitter para comunicarse durante la manifestación. La ausencia de toda mención de Clinton sobre este conocido intento de intimidar a los manifestantes, fue la confirmación de que el discurso era sobre el control monopolístico de EEUU de la Internet, no sobre ningunas supuestas libertades.

China no se perdió el mensaje. El periódico en inglés China Daily tenía un reportaje en la portada titulado: “Nuevo estímulo para la hegemonía de EEUU”.

El informe detalla cómo EEUU domina completamente y controla el Internet y cómo es la política militar de EEUU el mantener esa dominación.

“La revista Estrategia de Defensa de EEUU (U.S. Defense Strategy Review) declaró en marzo del 2005 que el espacio del Internet debe tener la misma prioridad que las jurisdicciones continentales, marítimas, aéreas y espaciales para los EEUU para así poder mantener una superioridad decisiva. Una declaración de Washington del 30 de junio de 2005 dejó en claro que el gobierno de EEUU mantendrá su control ... indefinidamente”, informó China Daily.

El artículo tiene una gran cantidad de información. Por ejemplo, cita a un ex agente de inteligencia estadounidense quien dice que el principal medio de la CIA para obtener información sobre China es a través del Internet. Y la acción de China en junio pasado exigiendo un filtro llamado “Presa Verde” que bloquea la actividad de espionaje, es lo que está en disputa con Google. Google está tratando de quitar el filtro Presa Verde. Lea el informe completo en [www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn), incluyendo los detalles sobre los ataques de guerra cibernética por los contratistas del Pentágono Northrop Grumman Corp. y General Dynamics. □